तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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No Need for Pretenders

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My open advice is that if anyone can remain a *brahmacārī* it is very nice. But there is no need of artificial *brahmacārīs*.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.6) it is stated that one who exhibits outwardly as self-restrained but inwardly thinks of sense gratification is condemned as a *mithyācāra*, pretender. We do not want pretenders in numbers; we only want a single sincere soul. There is no harm in accepting a wife and living without any disturbance of the mind and thus sincerely advancing in Krishna Consciousness.

— Letter to Lalita Kumar. 2 February 1970.

The Glories of Kartika-vrata The Story of Dhaneshwar

Adapted from Padma Purāṇa

sixth canto, chapters 113-114

Lord Krishna tells a story to his wife Satyabhama Devi to illustrate some of the glories of following kārttika-vrata, specific vows performed for the pleasure of Lord Vishnu during the month of Kārttika.

Previously there was a *brāhmaṇa* named Dhaneshwar who lived in the city of Avanti. He had fallen from the status of a *brāhmaṇa*, was addicted to sins, and was very wicked. He sold liquor, blankets, hides of animals, and behaved falsely. His mind was addicted to stealing, prostitutes, drinking and gambling. Once, while traveling about for selling his wares, Dhaneshwar arrived in the city Mahismati on the bank of the sin-destroying Narmada River. Dhaneshwar stayed there for one month. During that time he observed many men who had come from different directions to stay in Mahismati to follow vows for the month of *Kārttika*.

While daily walking on the bank of the Narmada selling his goods, Dhaneshwar saw *brāhmaṇas* bathing in the river, reciting prayers, and worshiping deities. Full of curiosity, Dhaneshwar saw some men reciting a *Purāṇa*, some engaged in listening to it, and some glorifying Lord Vishnu with dancing, singing and musical instruments. He saw some men who had marks like the conch, disk, club, etc. on their bodies in honor of Lord Vishnu, while others were wearing *prasādam*

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garlands and *tulasī*. Wandering about there every day, he came in repeated contact with Lord Vishnu's devotees, observed their devotional activities, and heard the name of Vishnu from their mouths. He resided there in this way for one month, at the end of which he observed *vaiṣṇavas* staying awake in honor of Lord Vishnu at the time of the concluding rites of their *kārttika-vratas*. On the full-moon day he saw the various kinds of worship being done, as well as the gift-giving, special feasts, and offering of lamps.

As Dhaneshwar wandered about observing the functions, suddenly he was bitten by a black serpent and fell to the ground. Seeing his condition, some pious men gathered around him out of pity and sprinkled water mixed with *tulasī* on his face. Dhaneshwar died in a few moments. Then the servants of Yamaraj bound him up, and, angrily beating him with whips, took him to Samyamani, the city of Yamaraj. Chitragupta, the scribe of Yamaraj, chastised Dhaneshwar, and told Yama, "Since his childhood we don't find any good deed performed by him. His sinful acts cannot be described even in many years! O lord, this person appears to be sin incarnate. Therefore, till the time of the destruction of the universe he should be roasted in hell."

Hearing Chitragupta's words, Yama angrily told his servants, "O you who look after the dead, take him! Tormenting him with your iron clubs; put him in the hell known as Kumbhipak and boil him in oil!"

When he was thrown there, Kumbhipak suddenly became cool. Seeing that great wonder, the official looking after the dead was amazed. He quickly went to Yamaraja and told him what had happened. Hearing this curious news, Yama said, "Oh? How is that?" and began to think over the matter.

Just then, Narada Muni arrived. After being properly honored by Yamaraja, Narada told him: "O son of Suryadev, it is not right for this person to suffer in hell, since his actions are of the kind that immunize one from hellish suffering.

yaḥ puṇya karmaṇāṁ kuryād darśana-sparśa-bhāṣaṇam
tat ṣaḍ-aṁśam avāpnoti puṇyasya niyataṁ naraḥ

One who sees, touches, or talks to those performing meritorious acts obtains one sixth of the merit of performing those deeds. (113.26-27)

"For the entire month of *Kārttika* he had innumerable contacts with persons observing the Vishnu vow. He therefore shares a portion of their religious merit. Moreover, since he served them he enjoys the entire religious merit of the vow. His *sukṛti*, pious credits, due to *kārttika-vrata* cannot be measured, since Lord Vishnu, to whom devotees are dear, destroys even the major sins of those who observe *kārttika-vrata*. Vishnu's devotees favored him at the time of his death by chanting the names of Vishnu and sprinkling water mixed with *tulasī* leaves on him. Therefore he should not be punished in hell. He now deserves a higher position. As far as his sins are concerned, he will receive the due reaction simply by seeing all of the punishments of hell."

After hearing Narada's words, Yamaraj realized the extent of Dhaneshwar's religious merit. He then ordered one of his servants to take Dhaneshwar on a tour of all the tortures found in hell. The official looking after the dead took Dhaneshwar and showed him all the various arrangements for torturing sinners, describing each one in detail. After showing him the different hells, that servant of Yamaraja took Dhaneshwar to the opulent world of the Yakshas. Dhaneshwar took up his residence there as a follower of Kuvera, the demigod of wealth, and became known as Dhanayaksha.

* * *

THOUGHTS: This story appears in *Padma Purāṇa*, and is directly told by Krishna to Rukmini. Still, the conclusion given, that by performing *kārttika-vrata* one can attain the association of the demigod of wealth, is not a promise that would inspire Gaudiya Vaishnavas. The followers of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are *ekāntika-bhaktas*, single-pointed devotees, only interested in pleasing Radha and Krishna. Their mood is illustrated by the following verse from *Nārada-pañcarātra* (2.6):

ārādhito yadi haris tapasā tataḥ kim
nārādhito yadi haris tapasā tataḥ kim

If one is worshiping Lord Hari, what is the use of performing austerities? And if one is not

worshiping Lord Hari, what is the use of performing austerities?

So, then, the question arises, why is Krishna describing a materialistic benefit as the fruit of *kārttika-vrata?*

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, compiled by Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami and commented on by Srila Sanatan Goswami, is the authoritative guidebook for Gaudiya Vaishnava rituals and behavior. The sixteenth chapter describes the glories of the month of *Kārttika.* Even this treatise, however, contains much glorification of the fruitive benefits of *kārttika-vrata,* as well as frightening admonitions of the suffering one will receive by neglecting this *vrata*. The following are a few examples:

* Whoever doesn't follow *kārttika-vrata* is like a murderer of their mother and father. (16.5)

* One who doesn't perform this *vrata* will take birth as an animal. (16.6)

* If a widow doesn't follow this *vrata* she will go to hell. (16.8)

* One who offers foodstuffs to Krishna during this month will reside in the heavenly planets for as many *yugas* as the grains of barley offered. (16.73)

* One who eats only once a day during this month becomes famous, powerful, and heroic. (16.86)

* Whoever offers a lamp to Krishna during this month becomes wealthy, fortunate, prosperous and a controller of others. They obtain good children, a beautiful home, wisdom and learning. (16.146)

How can we understand the above statements?

Krishna's purpose in describing the fruitive benefits of *kārttika* in the story of the *brāhmaṇa* Dhaneshwar, and Srila Gopal Bhatta and Sanatan Goswamis' similar descriptions in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa,* are for the benefit of materialistic people. Unless there is an opportunity for some fruitive gain, materialistics will not have an interest to observe *kārttika-vrata. Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* describes:

sulabhā mathurā bhūmau praty abdaṁ kārttikas tathā
tathāpi saṁsarantīha narā mūḍhā bhavāmbudhau

Even though *Kārttika* month is there every year, and even though it is easy to go to Mathura, still, bewildered people miss the opportunity placed before them. That is why they take birth again and again in the ocean of material life. (16.162)

Understanding the selfish nature of materialistic persons, Krishna and our previous *ācāryas* have described the *kārttika-vrata* in such a way as to attract them. Such persons perform pious acts during this month thinking that the fruit is sensual happiness. In this way they achieve *ajñāta-bhakty-unmukhī-sukṛti,* unknowingly acquired pious credits that lead to devotion. The true glory, of observing *kārttika-vrata* is that by doing so one can obtain devotion to Krishna.

Hari-bhaki-vilāsa describes the benefits of observing *kārttika* in Mathura:

bhuktiṁ muktiṁ harir dadyād arcito 'nyatra sevināṁ
bhaktiṁ ca na dadāty eṣa yato vaśya-karī hariḥ

Krishna grants happiness and liberation to devotees who worship him in places other than Mathura, but he does not give *bhakti*, for *bhakti* brings him under the control of his devotee. (16.157)

sa tv añjasā harer bhaktir labhyate kārttike naraiḥ
mathurāyāṁ sakṛd api śrī-dāmodara-pūjanāt

However, those who even once worship Krishna in Mathura during the month of Kārttika easily obtain this same *bhakti.* (16.158)

Niṣkāma-bhaktas, unalloyed devotees of Krishna, are not interested in the fruitive carrots that *śāstra* has dangled before the eyes of the donkey-like materialists. They see a much more meaningful purpose behind the month of *Kārttika.*

kiṁ yajñaiḥ kiṁ tapobhiś ca tīrthair anyaiś ca sevitaiḥ
kārtike mathurāyāṁ ced arcyate rādhikā-priyaḥ

What is the use of *yajñas*, austerities, and pilgrimages to a person who has the opportunity to worship Lord Krishna, the beloved of Radha, in Mathura during the month of *Kārttika*? (Text 163)

— MD

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All Glories to Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj!

By Uddhava Das

See Bindu *#110 for info about Uddhava Das.*

jaya kṛṣṇadāsa jaya kavirāja mahāśaya
sukavī paṇḍita agragaṇya
bhakti śāstre sunipuṇa apāra asīma-guṇa
sabe yāre kare dhanya dhanya

All glories to Krishnadas Kaviraj *mahāśaya*, the best of good poets and pandits! He is expert in *bhakti-śāstra*. His good qualities are vast and unlimited and he is glorified by all.

śrī gaurānga līlā-gaṇa varṇilena vṛndāvana
avaśeṣa ye saba rahila
se sakala kṛṣṇadāsa karilena suprakāśa
jaga mājhe vyāpita ha-ila

Vrindavan Das Thakur described pastimes of Sri Gauranga, but he did not describe them all. Whatever pastimes were left were manifested by Krishnadas and spread all over the world.

kavirājera payāra bhāvera samudra sāra
alpa loke bujhibāra pāre
kāvya nātaka kata purāṇādi śata śata
paḍilena vividha prakāre

The verses of Kaviraj Goswami are the essence of the ocean of love and are understood only by a few. Even if one is expert in poetry, drama and hundreds of *Purāṇas* one still won't be able to understand his writings.

caitanya-caritāmṛta śāstra sindhu makhi kata
likhe kavirāja kṛṣṇa-dāsa
pāṣaṇḍī nāstikāsura labhaye bhakti pracura
nāstikatā samūle vināśa

Churning the ocean of *śāstras*, Krishnadas Kaviraj wrote *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Reading that book, the offenders, the atheists, and the demons attained devotion and their atheism was destroyed.

śāstrera pramāna yāra loke māne camatkāra
yuktimārge sabe hāri māne
uddhava muḍha kumati ki habe tāhāra gati
kavīrāja rākhaha caraṇe

He astonished the world with his authoritative evidence from *śāstra* and defeated everyone on the path of argument. Uddhava Das is foolish and wicked, so what will be his destiny? O Kaviraj, please keep him at your feet. ❀

— Translated from *Gaura-pada-taraṅginī* edited by Jagadbandhu Bhadra. Sri Gauranga Press. Calcutta. 1931. Bengali. Page 313.

Radha Binds up Krishna

Srila Jiva Goswami Prabhupada

Prīti-sandarbha, anuccheda *367*

īdṛśa eva bhāvo'syāḥ kārttika-prasaṅge vrata-ratnākara-dhṛta-bhaviṣya-vacane dṛśyate

Srimati Radharani's exalted position is revealed in these words describing the month of *Kārttika* in the *Vraja-ratnākara-dhṛta* section of the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*:

tasmin dine ca bhagavān rātrau rādhā-gṛhaṁ yayau
sā ca kruddhā tam udare kāñcī-dāmnā babandha ha

"That evening Lord Krishna went to Radha's home. Angry, she bound his waist with her own sash.

kṛṣṇas tu sarvam āvedya nija-geha-mahotsavam
priyāṁ prasādayāmāsa tataḥ sā tam amocayat

"Telling her about a great festival at his home, Lord Krishna pacified his beloved Radha and she set him free." ❀

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